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BEFORE THE IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION)	CASE NO. AVU-E-17-01
OF AVISTA CORPORATION FOR THE)	CASE NO. AVU-G-17-01
AUTHORITY TO INCREASE ITS RATES)	
AND CHARGES FOR ELECTRIC AND)	
NATURAL GAS SERVICE TO ELECTRIC)	DIRECT TESTIMONY
AND NATURAL GAS CUSTOMERS IN THE)	OF
STATE OF IDAHO)	KEVIN J. CHRISTIE
)	

FOR AVISTA CORPORATION

(ELECTRIC AND NATURAL GAS)

1 I. INTRODUCTION

2 Q. Please state your name, employer and business
3 address.

4 A. My name is Kevin Christie and I am employed as the
5 Vice President of Customer Solutions for Avista Utilities, at
6 1411 East Mission Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

7 Q. Would you briefly describe your educational
8 background and professional experience?

9 A. Yes. I graduated from Washington State University
10 with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with an
11 accounting emphasis. I have also attended the University of
12 Idaho Utility Executive Course and the Finance for Senior
13 Executives program at Harvard Business School.

14 I joined the Company in 2005 as the Manager of Natural Gas
15 Planning. In 2007, I was appointed the Director of Gas Supply,
16 then in 2012 I was appointed as the Senior Director of Finance.
17 In 2014 I was appointed to Senior Director of Customer Solutions
18 and in 2015 I was appointed to my current position of Vice
19 President of Customer Solutions.

20 Prior to joining Avista, I was employed by Gas Transmission
21 Northwest (GTN). I was employed by GTN from 2001 to 2005 and
22 was the Director of Pipeline Marketing and Development from
23 2003 to 2005 and the Director of Pricing and Business Analysis

1 from 2001 to 2003. From 2000 to 2001, I was employed by PG&E
2 Corporation (PG&E) as the Manager of Finance and Assistant to
3 the SVP, Treasurer and CFO. Before joining PG&E, I was employed
4 by Pacific Gas Transmission Company (PGT) from 1994 to 2000.
5 While at PGT, I served in a number of roles including Manager,
6 Pricing and Business Analysis, and Director of Regulatory
7 Affairs. From 1990 to 1994, I was employed by Chevron USA.

8 **Q. What is the scope of your testimony?**

9 A. I will provide an overview of the Company's Customer
10 Solutions organization, our Customer Service & support
11 programs, what we are doing to meet our evolving customer
12 expectations, and finally, Avista's products and services
13 initiatives in Idaho.

14 A table of the contents for my testimony is as follows:

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21 **Q. Are you sponsoring any exhibits in this proceeding?**

22 A. No, I am not.

1 **II. OVERVIEW OF AVISTA'S CUSTOMER SOLUTIONS**

2 **Q. Please describe Avista Utilities' Customer Solutions**
3 **organization.**

4 A. Avista's Customer Solutions organization is comprised
5 of customer-facing departments - i.e., those that work directly
6 with our customers. Our organization supports the Company's
7 377,285 electric and 340,294 natural gas customers (as of
8 December 31, 2016) of which, 144,063 and 80,033 respectively,
9 were Idaho customers. As a department, our team is committed to
10 anticipating, developing, and implementing innovative and
11 engaging solutions that meet our customers' needs and
12 expectations. In addition, we are continually monitoring
13 trends in the utility industry and non-utility industry in order
14 to be proactive in providing our customers with solutions they
15 may be interested in. Lastly, we have renewed and enhanced our
16 emphasis in creating a feedback loop with our customers. For
17 example, we have been testing our digital concepts with
18 customers in advance, have used a social media panel for testing
19 ideas, as well as, surveying customers on programs they have
20 participated in, like our small business energy efficiency
21 program.

1 **Q. Please provide an overview of the departments within**
2 **the Customer Solutions organization that interact with our**
3 **customers.**

4 A. The following are the primary departments that
5 interact with our customers:

6 **Customer Service:** The Customer Service department is the
7 primary interface between the Company and its customers.
8 See Section III for additional details.

9
10 **Community Outreach and Energy Assistance:** The Community
11 Outreach and Energy Assistance department is responsible
12 for delivering and administering energy assistance
13 programs that reduce the energy burden for our low income
14 and vulnerable customers. In addition, the department is
15 responsible for offering outreach and energy conservation
16 education to low-income customers. See Section III for
17 additional information about the support offered by this
18 department.

19
20 **Energy Efficiency:** The Energy Efficiency department is
21 responsible for delivering the Company's electric and
22 natural energy efficiency programs. Its primary goal is
23 to meet or exceed the annual kWh and therm savings goals
24 in both the Company's Idaho and Washington jurisdictions.
25 In addition to delivering programs to reach the Company's
26 savings goals, the Energy Efficiency department also
27 provides tools and education to help customers control
28 their energy costs and reduce their energy footprint.

29
30 **External Communications:** The External Communications
31 department is responsible for customer communications and
32 for the Company's external facing technologies, which
33 include the Company's website and mobile applications.

34
35 **Products and Services:** The Products and Services
36 department is responsible for delivering new products and
37 services that our customers desire. Through engagement
38 and customer research, the department is focused on
39 delivering solutions that meet our customers' evolving
40 needs and expectations.

1 **III. CUSTOMER SERVICE & SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

2 **Q. Please describe Avista's Customer Service department.**

3 A. Avista's Customer Service department is the primary
4 interface between the Company and its customers and includes
5 Meter Reading, Billing, Credit and Collections, and the Call
6 Center. In 2016, the Call Center answered 726,644 calls and
7 fielded 66,124 emails and electronic communications from
8 customers across the Company's three jurisdictions: Idaho,
9 Oregon, and Washington. The Customer Service department is
10 comprised of approximately 220 employees that work in various
11 roles.

12 Avista's Call Center employees are spread across three
13 different service centers located in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho,
14 Lewiston, Idaho, and Spokane, Washington. The three service
15 centers are networked together to operate as a single Call
16 Center supporting Avista's customers. Each employee is trained
17 in their role to work with customer accounts or take phone calls
18 from customers in all three of the Company's jurisdictions. All
19 customer phone calls come in through a single number, 1-800-
20 227-9187, and are answered by the next available
21 representative, regardless of the location they reside. Our
22 most recent 2016 year end Voice of the Customer (VOC) results,
23 as further described in Section IV below, show that 93% of our

1 customers that had contact with Avista's Call Center in our
2 Idaho, Oregon, and Washington operating divisions were
3 satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received.¹

4 **Q. What customer support programs does Avista provide**
5 **for its customers in Idaho?**

6 A. Avista Utilities offers a number of programs for its
7 Idaho customers, such as Project Share for emergency assistance
8 to customers, a Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation
9 Service (CARES) program, level pay plans, and payment
10 arrangements. Through these programs, the Company works to
11 ease the burden of energy costs for customers that have the
12 greatest need.

13 To assist our customers in their ability to pay, the
14 Company focuses on actions and programs in four primary areas:
15 1) advocacy for, and support of, assistance programs providing
16 direct financial assistance for payment of customers' energy
17 bills; 2) low income and senior outreach programs; 3) energy
18 efficiency and energy conservation education; and 4) support of
19 community programs that increase customers' ability to pay
20 basic costs of living.

¹ For the 2016 Voice of the Customer results, 93% of customers that made contact with Avista's call center reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the service they received, while 94% of customers that had contact with Avista through the Call Center and/or work performed through an Avista construction office reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the service they received.

1 **Q. Please describe the recent results of Project Share.**

2 A. Project Share is a community-funded program Avista
3 sponsors to provide emergency assistance to families and/or
4 individuals where Avista provides service. Avista customers
5 and shareholders help support the fund with voluntary
6 contributions that are distributed through local community
7 action agencies to customers in need. Grants are available to
8 those in need, without regard to their heating source, and the
9 customers are not required to be Avista electric or natural gas
10 customers. For the 2015/2016 program year, Avista Utilities'
11 customers donated \$293,009 on a system-wide basis, of which
12 \$80,860 was available to Idaho Community Action Agencies. In
13 addition, the Company itself contributed \$240,000, of which
14 \$62,640 was available for the benefit of Idaho recipients.
15 During the 2015/2016 program year, 560 Avista customers in Idaho
16 received \$144,736 from Project Share towards their electric or
17 natural gas bills.

1 **Q. What other tools does the Company offer to assist**
2 **customers in managing their bills?**

3 A. In addition to the bill assistance available through
4 the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)²
5 and Project Share, the Company offers many billing options to
6 make it easier for customers to manager their bills. Choices
7 available to customers include Comfort Level Billing, flexible
8 payment plans or arrangements, and preferred due dates. One of
9 the goals of our Customer Service department is to provide tools
10 and options to customers to help them manage their bills before
11 they face a financial hardship or crisis. By accessing their
12 account online, customers can utilize our Bill Analyzer tool,
13 which helps them compare their usage to prior months or years,
14 as well as understand the key driving factors in any usage
15 increases, such as weather, billing days, rate changes, and
16 increased or decreased usage. Customers can also access our
17 Home Energy Analyzer tool, and complete a survey about their

² The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal program established in 1981 and funded annually by Congress. These federal dollars are released directly to states, territories, tribes and the District of Columbia who use the funds to provide energy assistance to low-income households. LIHEAP offers financial assistance to qualifying low-income households to help them pay their home heating or cooling bills. Under federal law, a household must have income below either 150 percent of the federal poverty level or 60 percent of state median income level, whichever is higher. However, states can set lower income thresholds if they choose to.

1 specific usage to help fine tune suggestions for energy savings
2 and management.

3 **Q. How does the Company assist customers in managing**
4 **and/or reducing their energy usage?**

5 A. Based on the Company's experience, we know that
6 energy efficiency is the best tool available to help customers
7 manage their energy usage and costs. Avista offers over 30
8 energy efficiency programs, with some 300 individual energy
9 efficiency measures for customers to take advantage of. Energy
10 efficiency messaging, tips, and outreach are utilized to
11 heighten awareness and increase adoption of programs and
12 measures. The Energy Efficiency department is integral in the
13 delivery of this information through the support of community
14 events, energy fairs, and low-income and senior workshops to
15 inform customers about what programs are available to them.

16 **Q. Is the Company proposing any changes to its low-**
17 **income energy efficiency programs?**

18 A. Avista continues to work with Commission Staff and
19 the Community Action Partnership Association (CAPAI), along
20 with their weatherization experts, on improving its low-income
21 weatherization and conservation education programs. While the
22 Company has not proposed an increase in low-income
23 weatherization funding as a part of this general rate case, we

1 would be supportive of an increase in funding through Schedules
2 91 and 191 to support the continued effort toward achieving all
3 cost-effective energy savings.

4 **Q. Please summarize Avista's Customer Assistance**
5 **Referral and Evaluation Services (CARES) program.**

6 A. In Idaho, Avista is currently working with 725
7 special needs and 55 life-support customers in the CARES
8 program. Specially-trained representatives provide referrals
9 to area agencies and churches for customers with special needs
10 for help with housing, utilities, medical assistance, etc. One
11 of the benefits we have in utilizing CARES representatives is
12 the ability to evaluate each customer, based on their specific
13 need, and to educate them on what assistance is available within
14 the community. A goal of the program is to enable customers to
15 manage not only their Avista bill, but other bills and needs as
16 well.

17 **Q. Does the Company perform any other outreach to its**
18 **customers?**

19 A. Yes. The following are examples of outreach programs
20 that are available to customers:

21 **1. Senior and Low-Income Outreach:** Avista has developed
22 specific outreach efforts to reach our more vulnerable
23 fixed and low-income customers (with special emphasis
24 on seniors and disabled customers) with bill payment
25 assistance and energy efficiency information that
26 emphasizes comfort and safety. Avista accomplishes this

1 outreach mainly through Energy Workshops. During 2016,
2 16 workshops were conducted in Idaho reaching nearly
3 813 seniors and low-income individuals. All workshop
4 participants were given Home Energy Efficiency kits
5 along with tips for low-cost/no-cost ways to manage
6 energy use. Each kit contains energy-saving items such
7 as LED light bulbs, plastic window covering, draft
8 stoppers for exterior light switches and outlets, v-
9 seal for drafty doors and a polar fleece lap blanket.
10 The Company also conducts general outreach in
11 partnership with organizations that are in contact with
12 vulnerable individuals through resource fairs or in-
13 home services. General outreach partnerships reached
14 613 individuals through 10 activities in Idaho. Through
15 all of these venues, individuals are provided with
16 information to effectively manage their home energy use
17 and the Company's bill assistance programs.
18

19 **2. Senior Publications:** Avista has created a one-page
20 advertisement that has been placed in senior resource
21 directories and targeted senior publications to reach
22 seniors with information about bill and payment options,
23 Avista CARES and energy assistance.
24

25 **3. Energy Fairs:** In 2016, Avista hosted one energy fair
26 in Cottonwood, Idaho, which reached 45 customers in the
27 rural community. The energy fair provided
28 demonstrations on energy efficiency and home
29 weatherization to limited income families and senior
30 citizens as well as provided an environment for
31 customers to learn about billing options and energy
32 assistance, while offering them tips and tools to use
33 to help manage their limited financial resources. The
34 following illustration shows customers receiving a
35 demonstration on how to use energy efficiency items they
36 received at the energy fairs.

1 **Illustration No. 1 - Fall 2016 Energy Fair**
2
3



26 **4. Mobile Outreach Van:** Avista offers many opportunities
27 throughout the year for customers to attend energy fairs
28 or workshops to learn more about energy assistance,
29 energy efficiency and the resources available to them.
30 But some of our more vulnerable customers have a hard
31 time getting to an event to access these resources. So
32 to ensure that we're reaching as many customers who need
33 our help as we can, Avista created the Energy Resource
34 Team van. The van is fully loaded with energy
35 efficiency items such as rope caulk, V-seals door sweeps
36 and coil cleaners, as well as informational materials
37 about bill and payment options, assistance, safety, and
38 efficiency. In 2016, the van provided outreach efforts
39 to 2,051 individuals through 28 events throughout our
40 Idaho service territory, many of which were in
41 conjunction with the Second Harvest Food Bank mobile
42 food pantry. The following illustrations show Avista
43 employees working at outreach events with the mobile
44 outreach van.

1 **Illustration No. 2 and 3 - Mobile Outreach Van Event**
2



12 In total the Company reached 13,134 individuals through
13 143 low income and senior events in 2016 between Idaho and
14 Washington. In 2017, we have increased our goal and have a
15 target of connecting with at least 25,000 customers through the
16 low income and senior programs mentioned above, along with other
17 community engagement activities.

18
19 **IV. MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS**

20 **Q. Please describe how the Company measures customer**
21 **satisfaction, and how important it is to Avista.**

22 A. Our customer satisfaction is very important to
23 Avista. One tool we use to measure satisfaction is by
24 conducting a quarterly survey we refer to as "Voice of the

1 Customer" (VOC).³ The purpose of the VOC Survey is to measure
2 and track customer satisfaction for Avista Utilities' "contact"
3 customers - i.e., customers who have had contact with Avista
4 through the Call Center and/or work performed through an Avista
5 construction office.

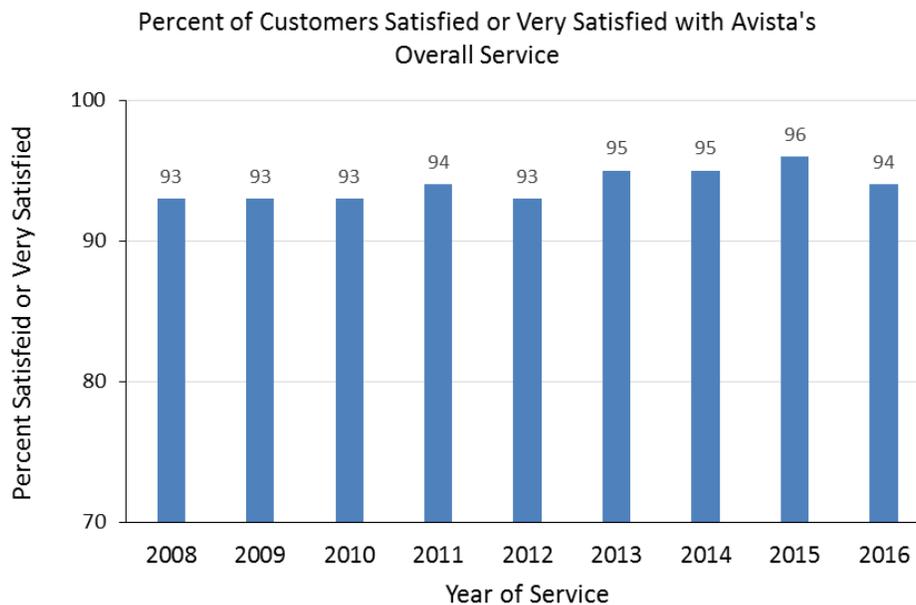
6 Customers are asked to rate the importance of several key
7 service attributes. They are then asked to rate Avista's
8 performance with respect to the same attributes (time for
9 connection to a representative, representative being courteous
10 and friendly, representative being knowledgeable, being
11 informed of job status, leaving property in condition found,
12 etc.). Customers are also asked to rate their satisfaction
13 with the overall service received from Avista Utilities.
14 Customer verbatim comments are also captured and recorded.

15 Our most recent 2016 year end results show that 94% of our
16 customers in our Idaho, Oregon, and Washington operating
17 divisions were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
18 they received. This rating reflects a positive experience for
19 customers who have contacted Avista related to the overall
20 customer service they received.

³ The Voice of the Customer survey is conducted by an independent third-party.

1 The VOC results from 2008 through 2016 are shown in Chart
2 No. 1 below. What these historical results represent is
3 Avista's long history of a culture of service. We understand
4 that good customer service is complex and requires awareness
5 and attention to a host of factors that contribute to the
6 overall service experience of our customers. It is for this
7 reason that we are proud that our annual VOC results have
8 remained consistently high and our expectation is that this
9 trend will continue in the future.

10 **Chart No. 1 - Historical VOC Results**



20 **Q. Are customer expectations changing?**

21 A. Yes, customer expectations are constantly changing
22 and the quality and nature of our service must evolve over time
23 to keep up with those expectations. The most rapidly changing

1 expectations are related to advancements in mobile and other
2 personal technology devices and applications, increased
3 proactive communications, and self-service options. As the
4 demographic makeup of our customer base becomes younger, our
5 customers are comparing us to the likes of Amazon or Apple,
6 such that they expect a digitized experience that is personal
7 to their individual preferences. These changing expectations
8 will require us to better understand our customers and their
9 varying needs and expectations.

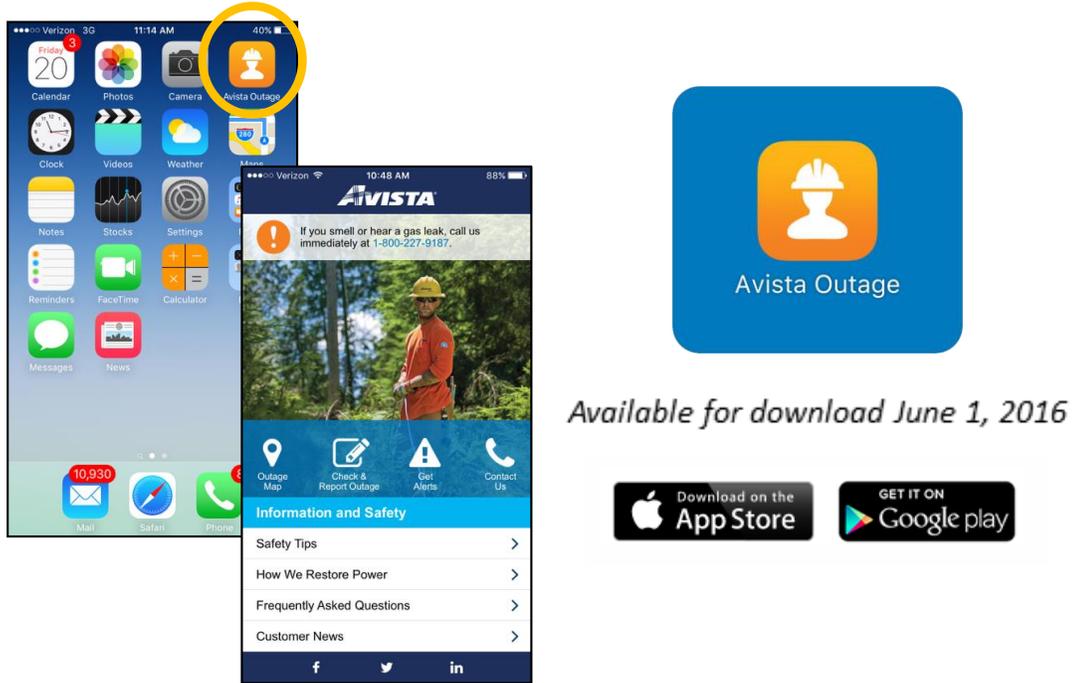
10 **Q. What is the Company doing to meet its customers'**
11 **changing expectations?**

12 A. We are continuously engaged in the very granular and
13 evolving work of assessing our customers' expectations and
14 evaluating our capabilities and performance in meeting them.
15 From a technology perspective, we have been making enhancements
16 to meet the changing customer expectations. In early 2015, the
17 Company launched new customer information and work management
18 systems. These new platforms provide the foundation for future
19 technologies, such as self-service online and mobile
20 applications. In November 2015 we launched our new outage
21 information tools known as our Outage Center, a mere two weeks
22 before a severe wind storm, the most devastating storm the
23 Company has experienced in its history, hit our service

1 territory. The new outage information center allows customers
2 to report outages, and allows Avista to provide real time
3 updates and alerts (via emails or text messages) to customers
4 about outages in their area and can be accessed at
5 www.avistautilities.com from a computer, tablet, or smart
6 phone.

7 The next phase of the outage information center, released
8 in June 2016, was a mobile application ("App") that customers
9 are able to download to their smartphone. The Avista Outage
10 App has similar functionality to the storm center, but offers
11 a more personal experience by keeping record of the customer's
12 account information via user authentication. Through the App
13 customers can quickly report outages, view the outage map, and
14 access important information, including proactive outage
15 alerts. Illustration No. 4 below provides an illustration of
16 Avista's Outage App.

1 **Illustration No. 4 - Avista Outage App**



13 In February 2017, the Company launched a new payment
14 experience as part of its overall website replacement effort.
15 The new experience provides for easier self-service through the
16 Company's website from a computer or mobile site from a smart
17 phone. The new payment process is simpler and mobile friendly.
18 In addition, residential customers are now able to pay through
19 any payment channel using any method they choose without a per-
20 transaction fee. The full replacement of the customer website
21 is expected to be completed in phases throughout 2017. Lastly,
22 work is also underway for additional self-service functionality
23 on Avista's mobile App. Future plans include the ability for
24 a customer to access their account just as they would on the

1 website, view their bill, and make payments. In addition to
2 the mobile App, we will be offering a variety of bill payment
3 alerts and the ability to pay by text.
4

5 **V. PRODUCTS AND SERVICES INITIATIVES**

6 **Q. Please provide an overview of Avista Utilities'**
7 **products and services initiatives.**

8 A. As mentioned above, customer expectations are
9 constantly changing and we know that customers have come to
10 expect more from their utility than simply the electricity and
11 natural gas that we deliver. In concert with changing customer
12 expectations, energy related technologies, such as solar and
13 electric vehicles, are increasingly of interest to customers as
14 they improve in functionality and decrease in cost. These
15 trends are creating more choices for customers regarding how
16 they receive, use, and manage their energy and Avista is working
17 to continually develop products and services that enable more
18 choices for our customers. For these reasons we have a team
19 focused on delivering new products and services that our
20 customers are interested in.

21 A description of some of the products and service
22 initiatives already launched include the following:

23 **HVAC Filter Replacement Program:** This program is designed
24 to educate customers on the value of replacing filters,

1 and offer choices to customers to make it more convenient
2 for them to remember to replace their filters. In addition
3 to extending the life of a furnace, replacing the furnace
4 filter helps to maintain the expected operating
5 performance of the furnace. This program was launched in
6 August of 2015, and it is available to all Avista customers
7 in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Through the filter
8 program, customers have three convenience options: 1)
9 Receiving an e-mail reminder from Avista on a periodic
10 basis to replace their filter, 2) receiving an e-mail
11 reminder with promotional codes from manufacturers and
12 vendors for discounts on filter purchases, and 3) the
13 opportunity to order filters directly from a vendor, for
14 delivery to their home or business on a schedule chosen by
15 the customer. To date, 2,954 customers have signed up for
16 one of the three options in this program on a system-wide
17 basis.⁴

18
19 **Rooftop Solar Estimator:** In mid-2015 Avista launched a
20 rooftop solar estimator on www.avistautilities.com. The
21 solar estimator tool provides a 20-year financial analysis
22 for customers that allows them to compare their options
23 for rooftop solar and make a more fully informed decision
24 as to whether rooftop solar makes sense for them or not.
25 In order to use the tool a customer enters their address
26 and finds their location on a map, then enters their
27 building type (residential or commercial), and average
28 energy usage. The tool then calculates a personalized
29 solar estimate for the customer, which includes a
30 recommended solar system sized for their roof, their
31 estimated annual savings or cost, and a financial analysis
32 of the costs and benefits of installing rooftop solar.
33 Since being launched approximately 3,400 customers have
34 used the rooftop solar estimator between Idaho and
35 Washington.

36
37 **Find an HVAC Contractor Feature on**
38 www.avistautilities.com: In March 2016, the Company
39 launched a new feature on its website for customers across
40 all of its jurisdictions to locate an HVAC contractor in
41 their area. Customers frequently ask our field personnel

⁴ To date, on a system-wide basis, 1,413 customers have requested an email reminder without coupons, 1,390 customers requested email reminders with coupons and 151 customer have signed up to receive filters direct from the vendor.

1 and Customer Service Representatives if they can recommend
2 an HVAC contractor for maintenance, repair, or replacement
3 of their HVAC system. Avista partnered with the Northwest
4 HVAC/R Association to provide referrals for qualified
5 equipment contractors. The tool allows customers to enter
6 their zip code and category of work needed, then they will
7 be provided with up to three equipment contractors that
8 serve their area. Through April 2017, an average of 670
9 people have accessed the Find an HVAC Contractor Feature
10 webpage per month.

11
12 **Q. What product and service initiatives are currently**
13 **being explored as potential offerings to our customers?**

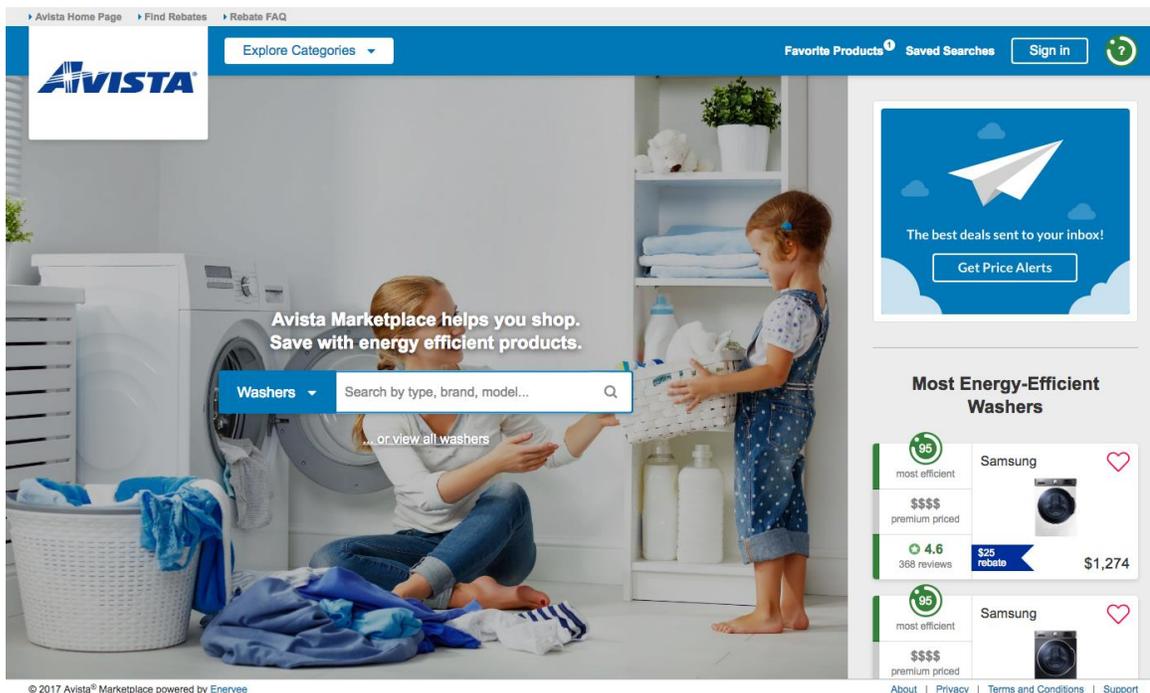
14 A. We are continually evaluating new products and
15 services that our customers may be interested in. One example
16 of a program that is currently being evaluated is the Avista
17 Home Energy Marketplace.

18 **Avista Home Energy Marketplace:** The platform, provided by
19 a third-party company named Enervee, will allow Avista
20 residential customers an upgraded online Marketplace to
21 help them find and purchase energy-saving electronics and
22 appliances by way of comparing a product's energy
23 efficiency, product popularity and price worthiness, based
24 on industry standards, against all models available on the
25 market.⁵ By providing details on each product's energy
26 usage, (based on Avista's rate structure) and costs, the
27 marketplace will make it easier for customers to make their
28 purchases, conserve energy and contribute to a clean,
29 sustainable environment. Enervee data shows that customers
30 that shop on the marketplace tend to buy equipment that is
31 approximately 15% more energy efficient than equipment
32 purchased through other methods. Avista customers can
33 create account profiles for saved searches, get price
34 alerts, and access Avista energy efficiency product

⁵ Enervee is the world's first energy-smart data and commerce platform that connects utilities, retailers, manufacturers and governments through integrated product rankings and recommendations. Through its extensive SaaS platform, Enervee provides the most up-to-date market information to help utilities empower their customers to make energy-smart buying decisions.

1 rebates. Customers will be able to access the Marketplace
2 on their desktop computers or on their mobile devices. The
3 Avista Home Energy Marketplace is expected to be launched
4 mid-2017. An example of what the Marketplace may look like
5 is shown in the following illustration.
6

7 **Illustration No. 5 - Sample Avista Home Energy Marketplace**
8 **Landing Page**



19 **Q. Does this conclude your pre-filed direct testimony?**

20 **A. Yes.**